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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Linda McCandless, 607-254-5137, email [llm3@cornell.edu](mailto:llm3@cornell.edu)

## **Cornell Stone Fruit Symposium Honored Robert L. Andersen**

**By Joe Ogradnick**

**GENEVA, NY:** "All you ever wanted to know about fruit with pits" could have been the title of the stone fruit symposium held in honor of Robert L. Andersen in March at Cornell University's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY. The 90 attendees were enthusiastic supporters of stone fruit production, and the contributions that Andersen has made to their industry. Andersen, who directed the stone fruit breeding and evaluation program at the Experiment Station, recently retired after 40 years as a faculty member in the department of horticultural sciences.

The program provided cutting-edge information on pollination biology, variety development, rootstocks, genetics, and breeding and training systems for stone fruits. A panel of New York growers focused on innovative marketing and packaging systems. Another addressed innovative ideas about the release of new varieties and how "club varieties" are becoming prevalent in the tree fruit industry.

Prominent stone fruit researchers from around the Northeast, growers and individuals in commercial production and marketing, and staff from the Experiment Station and Cornell Cooperative Extension were featured speakers and panel members.

During his talk "Pollination Research with *Prunus* Species and Its Importance to Fruit Growers," Andersen talked about how the importance of dreaming. "I believe in the scientific method, but it must include dreaming," he said. "Dreaming leads to theories which lead to hypotheses, which lead to experimentation. Ultimately, these dreams produce the basis for businesses that provide better food and a safer environment."

Andersen challenged the audience to "dream big" as they set about solving some of the more persistent problems facing stone fruit growers and researchers-problems that could well be addressed in the future using genomic tools.

Throughout the program, participants shared many positive thoughts about Andersen, his strong work ethic, his patience at building the stone fruit collection at

Pictures are linked to hi-res scans



Ninety enthusiastic attendees packed The Jordan Hall auditorium for the Symposium. Bob Andersen (left inset) gave the first presentation. Wanda Heuser Gale (right inset) became very animated as she told a story about Andersen. Photo Credit: Joe Ogradnick, NYSAES

Geneva, and his thorough knowledge of the industry.

Andersen will pass the stone fruit program to three other members of the horticultural sciences department at Geneva. Courtney A. Weber will work with plums and apricots, Susan K. Brown will assume responsibility for the cherry program, and Terence L. Robinson will assume responsibility for stone fruit production systems, rootstock evaluation and pears.

While at Cornell, Andersen released 17 varieties of cherries, plums, and peaches. The Geneva Experiment Station currently has nearly 30 acres dedicated to stone fruits consisting of 280 named and un-named varieties. Over the last 124 years, researchers at Geneva have introduced more than 245 varieties of apples, grapes, berries and stone fruits, selecting for yield, flavor, winter hardiness, insect and disease resistance, and vigor.

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Bob Andersen at work in the orchard.  
Photo Credit: R. Way, NYSAES

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New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, 630 West North Street, Geneva, New York 14456  
Telephone: 315.787.2011



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